

## Interview with Graeme Deany:

### Do you remember your early family days ?

As a young kid my family moved around country Victoria because of my father's work, so we lived in a number of country towns like Benalla and Lakes Entrance before settling permanently in Melbourne.

### When did you start playing sport competitively ?

I started playing cricket at Fitzroy Cricket Club as 13 year old in 1949. One of the famous Harvey brothers Ray Harvey noticed my athletic ability, throwing and fielding. He invited me down to Fitzroy Baseball Club and I started as a 16 year old in the 2nds in 1953 as there were no junior teams. Lyn Straw had tried to get me to go to play with Coburg around the same time.

### After your first season of baseball you were part of Fitzroy's last A grade Premiership team

In 1954 after one season of baseball I was selected to sit on the bench for the 1sts in the A grade Grand final against St Kilda at the Junction Oval. Fitzroy defeated St Kilda 6-4 . I recall Don Deeble playing for St Kilda and getting his guitar out to entertain the crowd at the game. The Fitzroy team included many well known baseballers Neil Harvey, Jack Potter, Jack Plant, Neil Turl and left handed pitcher Glen Tippett. This was the last of Fitzroy Baseball Club's A Grade premierships, the end of a golden era where the club won 4 premierships in 5 years in the 1950's out of their total of 16 A grade premierships.

### You were a cricketer and baseballer in those days

As a District cricketer I played 49 games for the 1sts that included a District Premiership in 1960/61 and runner up. There were 7 Fitzroy baseballers in that Premiership team.

### Where did you play baseball games ?

Club games were played at the Brunswick Street Oval in the 1950's often before Fitzroy VFL games. The club then moved its games to Merri Park at the back of Northcote High School on the William Barr Oval.

In those early days we also played games on the Carlton Footy ground, Albert Ground, Junction Oval St Kilda, Prahran Footy ground, Como Park, and the South Melbourne Footy ground under lights.

All games were "open park" baseball with all hits to the outfield being run out. Ross Straw Field at Parkville was one of the first grounds with a Homerun fence.

### You played various positions during your baseball career

I started playing baseball as an outfielder at left field and for 2 seasons played alongside Neil Harvey at CF and my younger brother Ian at RF. We were a very fast outfield combination and I can only recall 1 hit getting past us in that time.

After that I moved into the infield where I played shortstop and 3<sup>rd</sup> base for the rest of my career at the top level of baseball.

### What years did you play at Fitzroy ?

I played at Fitzroy from 1949 to 1962, then in 1963 went to Footscray as captain/coach and returned to Fitzroy to captain/coach in 1964 and 1965. In 1966 I moved to Ivanhoe and coached them to a C grade premiership that year.

My younger brother Ian played at Fitzroy from the early 1950's starting as a junior until 1964. He then went to Preston in 1965 and coached the club to both C and B Grade Premierships and got them into A grade.

## Who were some of the standout players you played with at Fitzroy during those years ?

During my time at Fitzroy I played with some great players that included 3 of the 5 Harvey brothers, Neil one of the greatest Test cricketers and member of the famous Invincibles Australian Test team , Ray and Brian.

Jack Potter a Test cricketer, Keith Cant a powerful hitter, Glen Tippett , State pitcher for many years, Neil Turl who played in the Australia v USA exhibition game at the 1956 Olympics at the MCG, Jack Plant and a number of other State baseballers.

## You have an amazing record in Australian baseball representing Victoria at Claxton Shield carnivals

Victorian Claxton Shield Team 1956 to 1966 for 11 consecutive years, winning the Claxton Shield 4 times playing at SS and 3<sup>rd</sup> Base, playing in 72 out of the 74 possible games. I was selected in the Australian team 9 times and 7 years in a row from 1957 to 1963, an Australian record at the time.

I won the Helms award in 1965 for the Best player of the Australian championships, the first Victorian to win the Helms award that was first awarded in 1962.

## Who do you consider were some of the best players you saw at Claxton shield level ?

Chookie McDougall 2<sup>nd</sup> base ( NSW)

Pitchers: Neil Page (SA), Colin Trezona (WA), Keith Whitford (VIC )

Harry Douglas (Newport, VIC), Brian Wonnacott (VIC)

Don Deeble (VIC) an inspiring player and a larrakin, Kevin Cantwell (NSW)

John Swanson (VIC) a great outfielder

Ross Straw was my only coach during my 11 years playing in the Claxton Shield. He was knowledgeable and astute, also willing to confer with the more senior players in the team like Don Deeble and Ken Stevens when making important game decisions.

### Finally Graeme, do you have some thoughts for the players going into the 2017/18 Season

Don't change what you've been doing from last season, play good team baseball as a united team and get people on base. I have been impressed particularly with the fielding in the 1sts last season.

I congratulate the club on winning the Division 1 Club Championship last season, sometimes that is a better achievement than an individual team premiership because the whole club is involved in achieving this award.

It has been a pleasure to talk to you Graeme and thank you for taking the time to share your remarkable story with the members of Fitzroy Baseball Club and we look forward to seeing you down at the club for life member functions and home games during the season.

Check out the club website for our next interview in the series.